

Historical Land Uses County Boundaries of 1852

Learner Outcomes

The learner will

- Analyze historical facts impacting the shape and size, and statehood of the New Mexico Territory.
- Calculate the size of the New Mexico Territory using a historical map.

Background

The New Mexico Territory was established by the Compromise of 1850. Almost 150 years ago this territory was nearly twice the size of the current state of New Mexico. The territory originally included all of the present states of Arizona and New Mexico, and portions of Colorado and Nevada. In 1853, the territory was further expanded by the addition of the Gadsden Purchase.

The New Mexico Territory barely missed statehood in 1850, but the death of President Zachary Taylor thwarted the bid for statehood. Instead, territorial status was given as part of the Compromise of 1850 and it was sixty more years before statehood was granted to New Mexico.

The current state of Arizona tried to separate from the New Mexico Territory several times before the Civil War. From Arizona to Santa Fe, where official business could be transacted, was hundreds of miles. In addition, there was friction between the predominately **Anglo** settlements in current day Arizona and the predominantly **Hispanic** settlements in New Mexico. In 1857 and 1860, Arizonians petitioned Congress to authorize the formation of a new state. In 1857, President James Buchanan and the New Mexico Territorial legislature introduced legislation into the United States Congress to divide the territory into the Arizona and New Mexico Territories, with the current north-south boundary proposed along the 109th meridian. In 1860, it was proposed to divide the territory at 33⁰ 44' North Latitude. If successful, this proposal would have divided Arizona and New Mexico along an east-west line, rather than the current division along a north-south line. The northern half was to be named Arizona and the southern half was to be named New Mexico.

Because the United States Congress took no action on the 1857 and 1860 initiatives, a secessionist group in Mesilla declared Arizona to be a territory of the Confederacy in March 1861. Following the defeat of Union forces by Confederate troops at Picacho Peak, just north of current day Tucson, Arizona, in July 1861, Arizona was recognized as a Confederate Territory. Some historians believe this action delayed statehood for both Arizona and New Mexico until 1912.

Materials

- Supplement numbers 2.11, 2.12
- Overhead projector
- Marking pen
- Calculator
- Ruler
- Pen or pencil

Assessments

- Worksheet with calculation
- Class participation and/or independent work

Activity #1
Historical Research
2 class periods

Procedure

The teacher will

- Facilitate a discussion about historical land uses of the Southwest, using supplement 2.11.

Activity #2
County Boundaries of 1852
2 class periods

Procedure

The teacher will

- Provide background information on the Civil War, and make students aware that the Civil War impacted people in the Southwest, even though the area was a territory.
- Explain the difference between a state and a territory.
- Discuss historical facts that will aid students in land area calculations on an upcoming worksheet.